



DONALD H. BLEVINS
Chief Probation Officer

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

9150 EAST IMPERIAL HIGHWAY — DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA 90242

(562) 940-2501



November 23, 2010

To: Each Supervisor

From: Donald H. Blevins *DB*
Chief Probation Officer

Subject: **ANALYSIS OF COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND
PROBATION COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDED PROTOCOL FOR
REPORTING PROBATION YOUTH FATALITIES**

On October 19, 2010, on motion of Supervisor Yaroslavsky, the Board directed the Probation Department to analyze and consider the protocol for reporting probation youth fatalities to the Board as included in the Commission for Children and Families and Probation Commission's October 14, 2010 joint report, and report back to the Board within 30 days with a recommendation on whether to implement the Commission's proposed recommendations.

Background and Overview

The majority of youth under Probation's jurisdiction reside in the community and are under probation supervision. Consequently, the majority of probationer deaths occur when youth are residing in the community, most of which are homicides. For youth fatalities that occur in the juvenile institutions, procedures have existed and are in accordance with Government Code requirements.

The focus of this response is on enhancing the existing protocols aimed at helping to report fatalities of youth that reside in both the community and the juvenile institutions.

The following are two key highlights of this response:

- A team review process has been in place for over two (2) years for the Residential Treatment Services and Detention Services Bureaus regarding the reporting of youth fatalities that occur in camps and halls, respectively. This team review process will continue.
- Probation has now established a team review process to specifically review fatalities of youth that reside in the community. All Juvenile Bureaus will be

represented at the team review meetings; the reviews will include a focus on systemic issues and lessons learned.

General Overview of Probation's Current Process

Probation currently notifies the Board regarding fatalities of youth under Probation's jurisdiction within three (3) working days of being notified. Probation logs key pertinent fatality information and conducts a case management review that begins once notification of a fatality is received.

The following provides the Commission's proposed five recommendations and the Probation Department's response to these recommendations. Except as noted, Probation generally agrees with the Commission's recommendations and their implementation, if not already implemented.

Recommendation #1

Create a specific administrative review team to fully examine each fatality to gather all information beginning with the Deputy Probation Officer, collateral contacts from other departments (i.e. DCFS, DMH, etc.), and to include consultation with teachers and family. (Note: The suggestion from the Probation Department workgroup members is that the review team be made up of the four Department administrative analysts and a rotating Bureau Chief for centralized review.)

Department Response: Partially Agree. (Implemented)

- A team review process has been in place for the Residential Treatment Services and Detention Services Bureaus regarding the reporting of youth fatalities that occur in camps and halls, respectively. The Department reports information in accordance with Government Code Section 12525, which requires that in any case in which a person dies while in the custody of any law enforcement agency or while in custody in a local or state correctional facility, the law enforcement agency or the agency in charge of the correctional facility shall report in writing to the Attorney General, within 10 days after the death, all facts in the possession of the law enforcement agency or agency in charge of the correctional facility concerning the death. Each death is reviewed to determine if the assessment and case plan were appropriate. This team review process related to youth fatalities that occur in the camps or halls will continue.
- A team review process has been in place for the Placement Services Bureau for those fatalities that involve youth that are placed in group homes or with a relative. Each death is reviewed to determine if the assessment and case plan were appropriate. As indicated below, this team review process will be consolidated with the newly developed case team review process for youth fatalities that occur in the community.

- A case team review process has now been established to specifically review youth fatalities that occur in the community.
- As indicated further above, all Juvenile Bureaus will be represented at the team review meeting. Each death is reviewed to determine if the assessment and case plan were appropriate and will include a focus on systemic issues and lessons learned.
- Fatality reviews will be completed within legal mandates. Subsequent to a youth's death, the Court terminates Probation's jurisdiction over the case. Consequently, consulting with teachers and family, if appropriate, will occur as included in the Commission's recommendation.

Recommendation #2

Report conclusions, particularly if systemic issues are identified, to the Board of Supervisors, Justice and Children's Deputies normally in 30-60 days.

Department's Response: Agree, as amended. (Pending Implementation)

- Findings will be reported within 60 - 90 days of the initial Board notification. This timeframe will enable a more complete report to be provided.

Recommendation #3

Improve case management documentation to be more specific. For example, if the youth threatened suicide – what followed? If a youth required drug or alcohol treatment – was it obtained? Was the youth in school? What kind of health services and medication were provided? Was the youth AWOL?

Department's Response: Agree. (Implemented)

- A case management review is currently conducted for probationers that includes a review of case management documentation and supervision/progress on the probation grant. This process will continue and will be included in the case team review.

Recommendation #4

Establish a log that is similar in nature to the fatality log that is kept by DCFS which includes: youth's first name and first letter of the last name, date of birth, date of death, referral date, Service Planning Area (SPA) Office, SPA number, probation status, placement type, mode of death, cause of death, child fatality cause, circumstances, ethnicity, race, and zip code. The log should be reviewed quarterly and reported to the Chief Probation Officer.

Department's Response: Agree. (Implemented)

Probation's log to be revised to include information applicable to Probation.

- Probation has logged deaths of youth under the Department's jurisdiction for over two years and has included all the data except SPA information.
- Based on the Commission's recommendation, the log has been revised to include the SPA data related to the probationer's residence.

Recommendation #5

The protocol being developed by the Probation department is titled, "Juvenile High Profile Case Notification Procedures." It is understood that all fatalities are "high profile" and include all youth under Probation jurisdiction.

Department's Response: Agree.

- The Juvenile High Profile Case Notification Procedures have been developed. The Commission is correct in its understanding that all fatalities are "high profile", and the death of any youth under Probation's jurisdiction is included.

The Probation Department appreciates the Commission's recommendations and their effort in improving the Department's protocol regarding reporting fatality information to the Board for those youth who reside in the community under Probation's jurisdiction.

Please contact me if you have any questions or if additional information is necessary, or your staff may contact Cal Remington, Chief Deputy, Probation, at (562) 940-2851.

DHB:CCR:SH:gj

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Honorable Michael Nash, Presiding Judge, Juvenile Court
Andrea Sheridan Ordin, County Counsel
Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Brence Culp, Chief Deputy, CEO
Jackie White, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, CEO
Justice Deputies